

phrases then been in fashion, the Continental peoples had reason enough to talk of 'the supremacy of the Anglo-Saxons.' This supremacy, which had sprung up in twenty years, was destined to perish with even greater rapidity^

The affairs of Spain were the immediate cause of Continental revolt against our domination. In 1369 King Henry of Castile, having been restored to his throne by French arms in the face of English opposition, entered into a naval alliance with France, which secured to the confederates the mastery of the Bay of Biscay and the Channel. Our importance in the councils of Europe, the prosperity of our commerce and our military hold over France, depended on our naval superiority, and that superiority was a thing of the past when the fleets of Castile and France together were in active hostility against us.¹ Our position in Aquitaine was at the same moment being undermined, although the veteran Black Prince himself was the governor. Even among his English soldiers, whose organisation and obedience on the field of battle left nothing to be desired, the state of perpetual discipline proper to an army of occupation was altogether wanting. The regiments, or * companies ' as they were called, were many of them officered by soldiers of fortune whose patriotism was the patriotism of Sir Dugald Dalgetty ; men who had not scrupled, when active employment was wanting in the English service, to follow Du Guesclin over the Pyrenees and help the French to turn the ally of England off the throne of Castile. The only means, by which Prince Edward could have held these men in hand, was pay more regular than the treasury of Aquitaine could afford. In order to satisfy his soldiers, he oppressed his subjects with heavy taxes, the method most effectual to remind them of their French nationality, and to prepare the way for Charles the Fifth as Liberator. When at last the ' companies,' to obtain compensation for their arrears, began to make unauthorised raids into the territory of the French King, the opportunity most desired by that wily monarch had arrived. He had now justification for opening the war. In the spring of 1369 his armies invaded the isolated English possession of Ponthieu in the north of France, and acquired it almost